1: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1954 AE9 Monguor AE9

843 562 842 ● society are naturally reflected in popular religion. Special deities in the lama monasteries are supposed to be interested in these affairs of mankind. The Monguors often invite lamas to help them with prayers, make vows to go on pilgrimages to far distant monasteries if they are granted a son, and give alms lavishly. Their religious interpretation is that lack of sons is a punishment for sins of the parents in previous incarnations. The condition of a childless woman is pitiable—she is always despondent and dejected and drags out a miserable existence. Not having a son means having no stake in the family and society in which she lives. Her life is lonely, for it is not easy for a childless woman to make friends. I have often had a mother come to me with her childless daughter-in-law, kneeling, weeping, and begging for medicine that will make the girl bear a child, repeating over and over again "Father, the ancestors will have no one to sacrifice to them, the family will have no posterity." Such pitiful scenes gave me an understanding of the social outlook of the people among whom I lived; I could even understand why they indulged in polygamy.

Childlessness is not common among the Monguors, however. On the contrary, a Monguor woman will frequently have six or more surviving children—an astonishingly large number, considering the great amount of hard work that the mother has to do and the fact that, owing to ignorance of the most elementary rules of hygiene, lack of doctors, and miscarriages, fully a third of the children die in early infancy. The Monguors are in fact much more prolific than their kinsmen who are still nomads. One reason for this may be the fact that they live in houses while the children of nomads living in tents 842 are more exposed to variations of temperature. Probably a more important reason is that there is less venereal 164 disease among the Monguors than among nomads. The lamas, most of whom are promiscuous in spite of their vows, and great carriers of venereal disease, have less opportunity to indulge themselves in the crowded and public dwellings of the Monguors than they do among the scattered tents of the nomads.[24] The neighboring Tibetans have a very high opinion of the prolificness of the Monguors. When they are childless, they prefer to adopt a Monguor boy rather than one of their own stock, and they like to marry Monguor girls because they bear 597 more children. The Monguors have no objection to giving a girl to a Tibetan family, especially if it is a rich family.

[24] In view of the fact that venereal disease is much less common, and families much larger, among the settled agricultural Mongols of southern and eastern Inner Mongolia than among the nomad Mongols, it is also probable that the transition from nomadism to agriculture among the Monguors has led to a stricter morality. When land becomes the principal form of property, the man who owns land wants to make sure that the son who inherits it is his legitimate son, whereas among pastoral Mongols a son, regardless of legitimacy, is a new herdsman, making it possible to look after an increased number of stock.—O. L.

[P. 99-b]

Mo 595 /100 cont'd/ the land is limited and rather poor. Now to procure for oneself two wives, maintain them, and raise the children who will be born is assuredly a heavy burden. It will therefore be necessary either to have the means and be more or less rich, or to be forced to it by circumstances. This is what we shall ascertain while examining the various categories of polygamists.

Let us always keep in mind the fact that since polygamy is not at all reprehensible in the eyes of the T'ou-jen, one sees it practiced by the most respectable people.

Is the number of wives limited? How many wives /101/ could one take and still remain an upright man in the eyes of the people? This is an idle question; I know of only a few cases of T'ou-jen who had three wives. I have never heard it said that a T'ou-jen went beyond this number.

2. The Four Categories of Polygamists

Mo 595 842 a) The first category of polygamists includes sterile couples. One sees polygamy where there are no children or where there is a scarcity of children. The necessity of having male children takes precedence over everything in T'ou-jen life. It is this way of thinking which gives the courage to live more poorly, sharing the daily bread, which is already very scarce, with a new life partner; it is again this way of thought which persuades the official wife and makes her allow the husband to take another partner. At the time of family disputes the sterility of the wife is the decisive argument to make her listen to reason and to preach patience and harmony in the family. Thus as a general rule, although the economic condition of the family permits it ever so little, a sterile couple will see a second wife added. (1). Fortunately, sterility always remains the

Ma 595 842

1. Shirokogoroff, op. cit., p. 64: Generally speaking the Manchus do not consider polygamy as a good institution, except in the case of the woman's

/101 cont'd/

Ma 595 842 sterility. In such case both wives are called "grand wife" in opposition to the concubines called "secret (to be hidden) young wife." /Cited in English./

Mo 595 842 exception.

Therefore in well-off families polygamy will often be seen where there are only one or two daughters; and at the same time one will not always meet two wives in rich families where there are very few children. How can one explain these facts?

Mo 593 171 It is that polygamy among the T'ou-jen remains in practice a very delicate and complex problem. In the family circle the T'ou-jen wife occupies a position much more important than the one which the Chinese wife occupies; in addition T'ou-jen family /102/ life is more intimate than Chinese family life. It proceeds from there that the T'ou-jen wife has more influence on the husband than her Chinese sister has. As schools are rare and intellectual formation among the men is almost nil, the wife will not be inferior to men in that direction. Let us suppose now that she has been able to make herself more or less appreciated by her husband, or let us suppose that having one or two children she is categorically opposed to the introduction of a second wife into the home; or let us suppose that she has won over to her side her /his?/ own parents and that they show themselves displeased with the project; or let us suppose that the wife suggests the word suicide... and then how many suppositions are still possible when one knows that the heart of a jealous woman is an inexhaustible source of expedients... and we shall understand that in practice polygamy bristles with numberless difficulties. As a general rule, if there are no serious motives which enter into it, like sterility or one of the causes explained below: a simple stray impulse, a desire of the lower instinct, even wealthiness, these alone are not enough for practicing polygamy.

Mo 595 589 b) The second category of polygamists: widows, or the levirate.

4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

The feast is celebrated all over the country. The Kurtain is dressed by the lamas in a splendid, long green gown with large sleeves, cut according to the style of the gown worn by Taoist priests. On his back are fixed a couple of small flags, and on his head he wears a helmet. He wears a sword, and holds in his hands a bow and three arrows. He is costumed like the warriors often seen in the theatrical exhibitions performed by Chinese actors. 756 579

The Living Buddha Kortong, incarnation of the deity, opened the pageant in the main temple, sitting on his throne presiding over the ceremony. The lamas, cross-legged, sat in a circle in the temple. The Kurtain sat on his low Chinese table in the center of the gathering of the monks with his legs sprawled wide apart. The throng crowded into the forecourt, following the display by looking through the open doors of the temple. The lamas started singing in unison the *swork'a*, and the Kurtain shook his head, ringing his small bells. Becoming excited, he danced his furious dance, worked himself into a frenzy, and played with his sword, whip, and dagger. Then he ran out of the temple, shot three arrows in the air, drank a draught of ox blood out of a bucket and spat it on some handfuls of barley which he threw in the direction of the audience, who tried to catch them in the skirts of their gowns. These grains are supposed to cure all kinds of illness and procure fertility for the women. However, the grains once they fall on the ground lose their magical efficacy. [942]

Then followed the customary questions. The Kurtain all of a sudden again became so mad and wild as to unsheath his sword, and killed an employee of the tribunal of the subprefecture of Ta-t'ung, who was attending the show. The Kurtain fled after his savage exploit and disappeared. The lamasery was saddled with the trouble and had to pay a very substantial indemnity. This fact, well known all over the country, is always recalled when Monguors talk about the violence and ferocity of the possessed Kurtains. It is no wonder that, during the exhibitions of Kurtains in the village temples, some people are often frightened out of their wits, take to their heels in panic, and leave the temple.

It happens more often that the Kurtain troubles the feast of the spring, performed by shamans in the village. At the moment when the people are devoutly and happily listening to the prophesies of the shamans, concerning the auspicious prospects for the harvest, a Kurtain arises and furiously asserts that his spirit has revealed to him that terrible hailstorms will destroy the crops of the village. In the southern valley, in the village called "the Eleventh House of the Li T'u-ssu," in 1914, a serious fight started between the shamans and the Kurtain, who was carried away unconscious. The Kurtain brought suit against the shamans at the Chinese court. The prefect delegated the guild of the Taoist priests to settle this matter between religious people. 756 578

[p. 93 (B)]

4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

If, however, black and white rites do not work, the Monguors call for the Taoist priest, who paints all the items used (the wood, etc.), with a coat of goat blood. He binds the logs in a bundle by means of goat guts, and sprinkles goat blood upon the burning fire. The rite is called the "red Wei-sang."

These facts give evidence of the importance attached by the Monguors to the fire for purifying from uncleanliness and preventing harm caused by evil spirits. They show their devotion for the fire by having a big cypress fire kindled during the performance of religious rites and the most important moments of life, as at marriages or the celebration of the sixtieth birthday. However, fire does not only play an important role in the life of the Monguors in the open air; its role is as important in the private life of the families where it is worshipped under the form of the "fire of the hearth," the "hearth god."

THE HEARTH FIRE

Among the Monguors, the Chinese, and the Tibetans, the cult of the hearth god belongs entirely to the department of the women. Everywhere, the temple of the hearth god is the kitchen.

No wonder that the hearth god is supposed to be interested in a special way in the fecundity of the wives and the protection of the children, and that it is honored at fixed times by its own ritual.

FIRE AND FECUNDITY

When the Monguor bride arrives at the home of the bridegroom, she does not prostrate herself before her parents-in-law or before the guests, but is led straight to the kitchen. Here she worships the god of the hearth giving three prostrations, burning incense, offering a bottle of wine and her chopsticks, which she has brought with her.

It was noted in the first volume of this study that the youngest couple in the family always lives in the kitchen, where the god of the hearth is honored, because the Monguors say that in that way fecundity is assured. Women who have plenty of children and do not wish to have more will leave the kitchen and live in another room. It has been noted that, among the Mongols, the youngest son inherits his father's hearth, occupies his tent, and is called the prince of the fire.

When poor people cannot afford the luxury of a lavish marriage, nor invite guests, they marry the young couple in the kitchen "before the god of the hearth." The makeup of the new bride is done before the god of the hearth and not in the living room.[19]

An unusual practice relates to the fecundity assumed to be bestowed on women by means of the cult of the spirit of the fire (and of the god of the hearth). On the fifteenth of the first moon, at night, on the edge of the big threshing floor of the village, a number of small heaps of cypress boughs are kindled. While musicians

[19] L. Schram, *Le Mariage chez les T'ou-jen du Kansu*, 39.

372 789 775 776 372 [342] 585 354 776 372 [428] 842 372 776 [p. 121 (A)]

4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

beat drums and play mandolins, all the younger wives and their husbands pursue each other, jumping over the fire heaps, merrymaking. No wives or husbands would miss this practice, for the tradition goes that it provides fecundity. However, the Yassa forbids jumping over the fire.[20]

Professor N. Poppe notes that among the Mongols the spirit of the fire is represented riding a he-goat, and that the he-goat is a symbol of fecundity, as Plano Carpini already noted.[21] This note of Professor Poppe evidences the existence of the fact that a relation existed between the fire god and fecundity in olden times. The Monguors seem not to know the existence of the god of the fire riding the he-goat, although they know that the hearth god secures fecundity. The hearth god also procures fecundity among the Buriats.[22]

FIRE AS THE PROTECTOR OF THE CHILDREN

The god of the hearth not only provides fecundity to the daughters-in-law, but it protects their children. On the second of the second moon is performed the rite of consecration of the children to the god of the hearth. In the very early morning, before boiling water for washing and making tea, the mother roasts some handfuls of spelt in the cauldron and after them some handfuls of peas. Husband and wife spread them devoutly in the courtyard in front of the door. Then the elders clip some hair from the foreheads of the children under thirteen years of age, and cut the nails on their fingers. Hair and nail parings are carefully put in a cup and covered with a red cloth. The cup is placed before the picture of the hearth god and a copper coin placed on top of it. All members of the family prostrate themselves nine times, holding incense sticks in their joined hands, and the incense sticks are then fixed before the picture of the hearth god. On the twenty-fourth of the twelfth moon, at the time the god starts its journey to Heaven, the contents of the cup are burned in the hearth, together with the picture of the god. The Monguors explain this as the yearly rite of consecration of the children to the hearth god.

CULT OF THE HEARTH GOD

Rite at the End of the Year

The most important rites in honor of the spirit of the hearth are performed at its departure for Heaven, and at its coming back from Heaven, for so important a benefactor must receive the highest honors possible, and the most affectionate greetings. This is true all over China. Men do not attend these rites.

The spirit of the hearth of the Chinese starts its journey to heaven on the twenty-third of the last moon of the year, on horseback or on a mule. The spirit of

[20] Schmidt, *op. cit.* 10: 73.

[21] Poppe, *op. cit.* 2: 135. See also n. 15, above, for Agni, the Hindu god, riding a ram.

[22] *Ibid.*, 301.

[p. 121(B)]